Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

Distr.: General
4 October 2007

Original: English

Twentieth session
New York, 27-14 September 2007

Statement by the Chairman of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on the progress of work in the Commission

1. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf held its twentieth session at United Nations Headquarters from 27 August to 14 September 2007, pursuant to the decision taken at its nineteenth session (CLCS/54, para. 66) and to paragraph 45 of General Assembly resolution 61/222. The plenary part of the session was held from 27 to 31 August as scheduled. At the request of the Commission, additional conference room services were provided on certain days during the second and third week of the session to facilitate adoption of decisions in a formal setting. During the other parts of the session, the Commission proceeded with the technical examination of submissions at the Geographic Information System (GIS) laboratories and other technical facilities of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs.

2. The following 19 members of the Commission attended the session: Alexandre Tagore Medeiros de Albuquerque, Osvaldo Pedro Astiz, Lawrence Folajimi Awosika, Harald Brekke, Galo Carrera Hurtado, Francis L. Charles, Peter F. Croker, Mihai Silviu German, Abu Bakar Jaafar, Emmanuel Kalngui, Yuri Borisovitch Kazmin, Wenzheng Lu, Isaac Owusu Oduro, Yong-ahn Park, Fernando Manuel Maia Pimentel, Sivaramakrishnan Rajan, Michael Anselme Marc Rosette, Philip Alexander Symonds and Kensaku Tamaki.

3. Indurlall Fagoonee and George Jaoshvili did not attend the session.

4. The Commission had before it the following documents and communications:

(a) Provisional agenda (CLCS/L.23);

(b) Statement by the Chairman of the Commission on the progress of work at its nineteenth session (CLCS/54);

(c) Letter dated 23 April 2007 from the Chairman of the Commission addressed to the President of the seventeenth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (SPLOS/156);

07-52989 (E) 241007

(d) Issues related to the workload of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf — note by the Secretariat (SPLOS/157);

(e) Decision on issues related to the workload of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (SPLOS/162);

(f) Decision on the allocation of seats on the Commission and the Tribunal (SPLOS/163);

(g) Report of the seventeenth Meeting of States Parties (SPLOS/164);

(h) Submission of Australia dated 15 November 2004 made pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and addressed through the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Commission;

(i) Submission of New Zealand dated 19 April 2006 made pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the Convention and addressed through the Secretary-General to the Commission;

(j) Joint submission of France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland dated 19 May 2006 made pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the Convention and addressed through the Secretary-General to the Commission;

(k) Submission of Norway dated 27 November 2006 made pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the Convention and addressed through the Secretary-General to the Commission;

(l) Submission of France dated 22 May 2007 made pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the Convention and addressed through the Secretary-General to the Commission;

(m) Communications from the Permanent Mission of Vanuatu to the United Nations dated 11 July 2007, the Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations dated 15 August 2007 and the Permanent Mission of Suriname to the United Nations dated 17 August 2007, in relation to the submission made by France to the Commission.

Item 1
Opening of the twentieth session by the representative of the Secretary-General

5. Václáv Mikulka, Director of the Division in charge of the Office of Legal Affairs, opened the twentieth session of the Commission on behalf of the Secretary-General.

6. Recalling that 2007 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the Convention for signature and the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Commission, the Director underscored the role that the certainty of the limits of maritime zones plays in international relations and, in that context, the importance of the functions performed by the Commission, since it made recommendations to coastal States on matters related to the establishment by them of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.

7. The Director pointed out that the number of submissions received by the Commission had been steadily growing and that both submitting States and the international community at large were intent on making progress in the delineation of the outer limits of continental shelves. He recalled that the seventeenth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention had discussed the increasing workload of the Commission and reaffirmed that the matter would continue to be addressed by the meeting as a matter of priority. Finally, the Director assured the members of the Commission that the Secretariat would continue making every effort, within the financial resources available, to provide the assistance that the Commission requires for the discharge of its functions.

Item 2
Solemn declaration by the members of the Commission

8. The twentieth session was the first to be attended by the members elected at the seventeenth Meeting of States Parties (see SPLOS/164, paras. 79-92).[1] Pursuant to rule 10 of the rules of procedure of the Commission (CLCS/40), each member of the Commission made the solemn declaration in writing and delivered it to the Director of the Division.

Item 3
Election of the Chairman of the Commission

9. The Director of the Division, as the representative of the Secretary-General, presided over the election of the new Chairman of the Commission. Following consultations, the Commission elected by acclamation Mr. Albuquerque as Chairman. In accordance with rule 13 of the rules of procedure, the Chairman of the Commission was elected for a term of two and a half years and will be eligible for re-election.

Item 4
Adoption of the agenda

10. The Chairman proposed the provisional agenda (CLCS/L.23) for consideration by the Commission. The provisional agenda was adopted without amendment (CLCS/55).

Item 5
Election of the Vice-Chairmen

11. Following consultations, Messrs. Awosika, Brekke, Kazmin and Park were elected by acclamation as Vice-Chairmen. In accordance with rule 13 of the rules of procedure, the Vice-Chairmen were elected for a term of two and a half years and will be eligible for re-election.

[1] On 14 and 15 June 2007, the seventeenth Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention elected 21 members of the Commission for a term of five years. The term of the previous 21 members expired on 15 June 2007.

Item 6
Appointment of the members of the subcommissions and other subsidiary bodies

12. In the light of the partial change in membership of the Commission, which resulted from the elections held at the seventeenth Meeting of States Parties, it became necessary to fill certain vacancies in the subcommissions.[2]

13. Following consultations, the Commission appointed:

(a) Messrs. Rajan and Rosette to fill the two vacancies occurring in each of the Subcommissions established for the examination of the submissions made by Australia and by New Zealand;

(b) Mr. Charles to fill the vacancy in each of the Subcommissions established for the examination of the joint submission made by France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of the submission by Norway.

14. The Commission also decided that it would fill the vacancies of the Subcommissions that had already issued recommendations, if and when the need arose.[3]

15. The subsidiary bodies of the Commission also needed to be reconstituted following the elections of members of the Commission at the seventeenth Meeting of States Parties. The Commission appointed Messrs. Astiz, Croker, Kazmin, Rosette and Tamaki to the Committee on Confidentiality.

16. The Commission also appointed Messrs. Charles, German, Kalngui, Rajan and Symonds to the Standing Committee on provision of scientific and technical advice to coastal States.

17. The Editorial Committee and the Training Committee have open-ended membership. Nevertheless the Commission decided that Messrs. Albuquerque, Astiz, Awosika, Carrera, Charles, Croker, Jaafar, Kalngui, Kazmin, Lu, Oduro, Park, Rajan and Rosette would form the core group of the Editorial Committee and that Messrs. Awosika, Brekke, Carrera, Charles, German, Kalngui, Oduro, Park, Rosette and Tamaki would form the core group of the Training Committee.

Item 7
Organization of work

18. The Chairman outlined the programme of work and the schedule for the Commission's deliberations on the various items of the agenda. He noted that, in respect of the work to be carried out in plenary with regard to the recommendations of the Subcommission established for the consideration of the submission made by

[2] Under rule 42, paragraph 2, of the rules of procedure "[t]he term of a subcommission shall extend from the time of its appointment to the time that the submitting coastal State deposits, in accordance with article 76, paragraph 9, of the Convention, the charts and relevant information, including geodetic data, regarding the outer limits for that part of the continental shelf for which the submission was originally made".

[3] Those Subcommissions are the three established for the examination of the submissions made, respectively, by Brazil, by Ireland and by the Russian Federation.

Australia, considerable time would have to be allowed for the review of those recommendations by all the members of the Commission, as well as the review of data in the GIS laboratories. The Commission agreed on the programme of work as proposed.

Item 8
Consideration of the submission made by Australia to the Commission pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

Consideration of recommendations

19. At its nineteenth session, the Commission decided to defer the adoption of the recommendations prepared by the Subcommission to the twentieth session of the Commission, in order to provide its members with further time to examine them.

20. At the twentieth session, a meeting between the delegation of Australia and the Commission was held on 28 August 2007, at the request of the delegation of Australia. For the benefit of the new members of the Commission, the representatives of Australia repeated the presentation that they had made at the nineteenth session (see CLCS/54, paras. 25-32).

21. The Commission considered the recommendations prepared by the Subcommission in detail, region by region. The Commission decided to defer the adoption of the recommendations to the twenty-first session in view of ongoing deliberations on certain critical issues.

Item 9
Consideration of the submission made by New Zealand to the Commission pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

Report of the Chairman of the Subcommission regarding the progress of work prior to and during the twentieth session

22. Prior to the twentieth session the Subcommission had received a comprehensive response to its preliminary considerations and questions presented at its nineteenth session, which was made available by the Secretariat to the Subcommission members through the secure means of communication for their examination and consideration.

23. The Subcommission, chaired by Mr. Tamaki, met on 4 September 2007 to work on the submission and the new material and to review the results of the intersessional work of the Subcommission. The Subcommission also met, chaired by Mr. Brekke, to continue its work on 10, 12 and 14 September 2007.

24. The Subcommission met with the delegation of New Zealand on the same dates. During those meetings New Zealand made presentations on its response to the preliminary considerations and questions presented earlier by the Subcommission. The Subcommission also presented its preliminary considerations on outstanding matters of the submission.

25. The working session of the Subcommission ended on 14 September 2007. The Subcommission decided to meet for one week during the resumed twentieth session, from 21 to 25 January 2008, and to meet at the twenty-first session, from 24 to 28 March 2008, with an option to meet also the week before, from 17 to 21 March 2008. In addition, the members of the Subcommission decided to work individually and communicate through the secure means of communication throughout the intersessional period in order to make further progress.

Item 10
Consideration of the joint submission made by France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Commission pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

26. Arising from the examination of the joint submission made by France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, during the intersessional period and during the twentieth session, the Subcommission had to address matters of general principle related to joint submissions. The Subcommission decided to refer those matters to the attention of the plenary at the twentieth session because it was the first joint submission received by the Commission.

27. In accordance with annex I of its rules of procedure, the Commission deliberated on those matters and concluded that the choice of two or more States to avail themselves of a joint submission in cases of a dispute between States with opposite or adjacent coasts or in other cases of unresolved land or maritime disputes, is procedural in nature and, as such, does not alter the substance of the rights granted them by article 76 of the Convention.

28. Accordingly, the total area of continental shelf resulting from the outer limits of the continental shelf proposed in a joint submission cannot be larger than the sum of the individual areas of continental shelf resulting from the outer limits of the continental shelf that each of the States would have proposed if they had made separate submissions. In other words, in any joint submission, each coastal State has to establish its own set of criteria for the feet of the continental slope, applied formulas, constraints and respective outer limits.

29. When referring the matter of principle to the Commission, the Subcommission did so in general terms. As a consequence, the Commission did not take a decision on the question as it specifically related to the submission made by France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom, but reached a decision of principle that would apply to all joint submissions. In view of the general nature of that decision, the Commission mandated its Editorial Committee to incorporate it in annex I to the rules of procedure.

Report of the Chairman of the Subcommission regarding the progress of work prior to and during the twentieth session

30. The Chairman of the Subcommission established to examine the joint submission made by France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom of Great

Britain and Northern Ireland reported on the work carried out during the intersessional period and on the twentieth session.

31. The Chairman informed the Commission that during the intersessional period and at the twentieth session the Subcommission had examined the additional material submitted intersessionally by the four delegations in response to a request by the Subcommission.

32. He indicated that the Subcommission had communicated to the four delegations the decision taken by the Commission about joint submissions. The four delegations had also been informed of how the Subcommission intended to apply the decision by the Commission to the joint partial submission and modify the views and general conclusions that had been presented to the delegations at its nineteenth session (see CLCS/54, para. 40).

33. The Chairman informed the Commission that the Subcommission would continue the examination of the submission during the resumed twentieth session, when it planned also to meet the four delegations, between 21 and 23 January 2008, and intended to finalize its recommendations and present them to the Commission at the twenty-first session.

Item 11
Consideration of the submission made by Norway to the Commission pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

Report of the Chairman of the Subcommission regarding the progress of work prior to and during the twentieth session

34. The Chairman of the Subcommission informed the Commission that, during the intersessional period, Norway had provided responses to all of the remaining questions posed by the Subcommission during the nineteenth session.

35. The Chairman later reported that the Subcommission had met on a number of occasions during the week of 10 to 14 September 2007 to continue its analysis of the data and other materials contained in the submission of Norway, as well as the responses to questions received from Norway during the intersessional period. During that week, Norway arranged for two representatives of GeoCap to be present in New York to train the two members of the Subcommission who had not previously received training in the use of the GeoCap application during the nineteenth session. The GeoCap representatives also provided support to other members of the Subcommission during their use of GeoCap to examine the submission of Norway.

36. The members of the Subcommission decided to continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period and to meet again in New York during the resumed twentieth session, from 21 January to 1 February 2008. The Subcommission also planned to meet from 24 to 28 March and from 14 to 18 April 2008 during the twenty-first session of the Commission.

Item 12
Consideration of the submission made by France to the Commission pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

37. The presentation on the submission of France, on behalf of the Overseas Department of French Guiana and of the Territorial Collectivity of New Caledonia, was made on 31 August 2007 by Elie Jarmache, Chargé de mission, Secrétariat Général de la mer, France. The delegation of France also included several scientific and technical advisers.

38. In addition to elaborating on substantive points of the submission, Mr. Jarmache reported that no member of the Commission had assisted France by providing scientific and technical advice with respect to the submission.

39. He noted that the submission of France was a partial submission in two sections that contained data and information concerning the outer limits in the areas of French Guiana and the south-east and south-west of New Caledonia.

40. In respect of disputes related to the submission, Mr. Jarmache stated that the continental shelf in the area of French Guiana was not subject to any dispute between France and any other States. With regard to the south-east sector of New Caledonia, he said that the continental shelf in that area was the subject of exchanges of notes verbales between France on the one side and Australia and New Zealand on the other. In their respective communications, both Australia and New Zealand indicated that their submissions in the area could be treated as without prejudice to issues related to the delimitation of the continental shelf between them. France, however, requested the Commission to refrain from considering the portion of its partial submission which related to that sector of the continental shelf of New Caledonia, following an objection made by Vanuatu with regard to Matthew Island and Hunter Island. Mr. Jarmache emphasized that that request by France should not be construed as recognition of the position of Vanuatu. He also indicated that the south-west sector of the continental shelf was not subject to any dispute and, therefore, the Commission could proceed with the examination of the portion of the submission related to that area.

41. Following the presentation, Mr. Jarmache and other members of the delegation of France responded to questions posed by the members of the Commission.

42. The Commission then continued its meeting in private. Addressing the modalities for the consideration of the submission, the Commission decided that, as provided for in article 5 of annex II to the Convention, the submission of France would be considered by way of a subcommission.

43. The Commission then established a Subcommission to examine the partial submission of France, in accordance with the established procedure (see CLCS/42), composed of the following members: Messrs. Astiz, Brekke, Carrera, Kalngui, Lu, Oduro and Park.

44. The Commission requested the Subcommission thus established to meet with a view to organizing its work, electing its officers and providing, on the basis of a preliminary examination of the submission, a time estimate for its work.

Report of the Chairman of the Subcommission regarding the progress of work during the twentieth session

45. The Chairman of the Subcommission reported that the Subcommission had met and elected Mr. Carrera as Chairman and Messrs. Astiz and Park as Vice-Chairmen.

46. The Subcommission appointed to consider the partial submission made by France held an informal session on the morning of 3 September 2007. At that meeting, some members of the Subcommission began to acquaint themselves with the type of documents and materials provided in printed and electronic form in the Submission for management and future consideration purposes. The Chairman held consultations with the members of the Subcommission in order to provide a timely response to the request made by the French delegation to meet the members of the newly appointed Subcommission. The members decided unanimously to accept the request made by the French delegation and they agreed to invite them to a meeting to be held later that day at the premises of the Division.

47. The Subcommission received the delegation of France led by Elie Jarmache. The Subcommission proceeded to make the introductions and both parties took advantage of the opportunity to clarify the following issues:

(a) The Subcommission informed the delegation that, in accordance with the decision adopted by the Commission at its eighteenth session, only three subcommissions should function simultaneously while considering submissions (see CLCS/52, para. 38). Given that there are currently three other Subcommissions appointed which are actively considering submissions, the Commission had agreed to make an exception on the understanding that the formal consideration of the submission would not start until the twenty-first session of the Commission. The French delegation took note of that fact and thanked the Commission for its decision;

(b) The Subcommission informed the delegation about the implications of considering a submission as confidential in whole and/or in part according to the practice implemented by the Secretariat. The French delegation took note of those implications and made clear to the Commission the extent to which members of the Subcommission and the Secretariat could proceed with the management of the submission;

(c) The delegation expressed its understanding and requested confirmation that no meetings or technical clarifications would be required by the Subcommission during the intersessional period. The Subcommission confirmed that no such meetings would be required in the light of the decision taken by the Commission.

48. Following up on the consideration of confidentiality issues discussed during that meeting, the Chairman of the Subcommission proceeded to address a letter, dated 5 September 2007, to the head of the French delegation in order to clarify further certain logistical issues, which could further assist the Subcommission in the management of the submission during the intersessional period. The head of the delegation responded in a letter dated 11 September 2007, outlining the terms under which the French delegation provided its agreement to the management request made by the Subcommission.

49. The Subcommission held an official meeting on 14 September 2007, at which it agreed to form three working groups. A working group on geodesy and hydrography was formed with the membership of Messrs. Astiz, Kalngui, Lu and Carrera. A working group on geology and geophysics was formed with the membership of Messrs. Brekke, Kalngui, Oduro, Park and Carrera. A working group on quality control was formed with the membership of Messrs. Brekke, Oduro and Carrera.

50. The Subcommission will hold its first full session from 14 to 18 April 2008.

Item 13
Report of the Chairman of the Commission on the seventeenth Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

51. At its nineteenth session, the Commission decided that its discussion of matters relating to workload, taking into account the decision of the sixteenth Meeting of States Parties (see SPLOS/144, para. 4), would be reflected in the letter of the Chairman to the President of the seventeenth Meeting of States Parties, and that the Chairman would also make a presentation to the Meeting addressing the workload of the Commission. In addition, the Commission decided to reiterate, through both the letter of the Chairman and his presentation to the Meeting, the proposal that the members of the Commission receive emoluments and expenses while performing Commission duties concerning the consideration of submissions made by coastal States on the outer limits of the continental shelf under article 76, and that such emoluments and expenses be defrayed through the regular budget of the United Nations (see CLCS/54, paras. 55-58).

52. At the twentieth session, Mr. Croker, former Chairman of the Commission, informed the Commission about the proceedings of the seventeenth Meeting of States Parties relevant to the work of the Commission. In particular, he reported on the presentation he had made to the Meeting and on the informal consultations concerning issues related to the workload of the Commission that had followed. Mr. Croker informed the Commission that, in the context of the deliberations relating to the Commission, the Director of the Division had provided the Meeting with detailed information, including cost estimates, on the requirements related to strengthening of the Secretariat's capacity to service the Commission (see SPLOS/157, para. 63). In concluding, Mr. Croker provided an overview of the decisions adopted by the Meeting on matters of relevance to the Commission, namely, the decision on issues related to the workload of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (SPLOS/162) and the decision on the allocation of seats on the Commission and the Tribunal (SPLOS/163).

53. Upon the suggestion of one member of the Commission, it was decided that the Chairman would address a letter to the President of the General Assembly to emphasize the need for at least two weeks of plenary work at each future session, as the Commission was at the stage of adopting recommendations on submissions made by coastal States and other important decisions that require interpretation in all official languages and full conference services.

Items 14 and 16
Consideration of the revised text of the rules of procedure of the Commission/Report of the Chairman of the Editorial Committee

54. The Editorial Committee met and elected Mr. Jaafar as Chairman and Messrs. Croker and Rajan as Vice-Chairmen.

55. At its nineteenth session, the Commission decided to defer to its twentieth session the examination of a draft revision of the rules of procedure of the Commission prepared by the Editorial Committee (see CLCS/54, para. 59). At the twentieth session, the Editorial Committee was mandated to continue its consideration of the revision of the rules of procedure. It finalized and agreed on the set of amendments which were proposed at the nineteenth session and also considered a new set of proposals for amendments. The Commission decided to defer consideration of the revised rules of procedure of the Commission to the twenty-first session.

Item 15
Report of the Chairman of the Committee on Confidentiality

56. The Committee on Confidentiality met and elected Mr. Croker as Chairman and Messrs. Rosette and Tamaki as Vice-Chairmen.

Item 17
Report of the Chairman of the Scientific and Technical Advice Committee

57. The Scientific and Technical Advice Committee met and elected Mr. Symonds as Chairman and Messrs. Kalngui and Rajan as Vice-Chairmen.

Item 18
Report of the Chairman of the Training Committee

58. The Training Committee met and elected Mr. Carrera as Chairman and Messrs. Oduro and Park as Vice-Chairmen.

59. During the discussion of the agenda item, the Director of the Division provided the Commission with an overview of the sixth training course on the preparation of a submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf regarding the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured. The training course, which was organized by the Division in collaboration with the Government of South Africa and with the support of the Global Research Information Database in Arendal, Norway, and the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany, was conducted in Cape Town, South Africa, from 13 to 17 August 2007. It was the second course organized at the subregional level. A total of 43 technical and administrative staff from Angola, the Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, the Seychelles, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania participated in the course. The Director expressed his

gratitude to Messrs. Awosika, Brekke, Carrera (current members of the Commission), Hinz (former member of the Commission) and to the experts from the Division for their contribution to the course as instructors and experts. The Director also expressed the gratitude of the Division to the Government of South Africa for the dependable and timely support provided, as well as to the other partners involved in the organization of the course.

Item 19
Other matters

Future sessions of the Commission

60. The Commission decided that it would hold a resumed twentieth session from 21 January to 1 February 2008. The Commission also decided that the twenty-first session would be held from 17 March to 18 April 2008 and the twenty-second session would be held from 11 August to 12 September 2008, on the understanding that the periods from 31 March to 11 April and from 18 to 29 August would be for plenary meetings and that the periods from 17 to 28 March, from 14 to 18 April, from 11 to 15 August and from 2 to 12 September 2008 would be used for the technical examination of submissions at the Geographic Information System laboratories and other technical facilities of the Division.

Trust funds

61. The Director of the Division informed the members of the Commission about the status of the trust fund for the purpose of defraying the cost of participation of the members of the Commission from developing States in the meetings of the Commission. He stated that no contributions had been made to the trust fund since the last session of the Commission and that the cost to the trust fund, including performance support costs, relating to the assistance provided to three members of the Commission in respect of the twentieth session, was approximately $39,300. He noted that, according to the provisional statement of accounts, as at the end of June 2007 the balance of the trust fund was estimated to be $532,900. That did not include the costs associated with the financial assistance provided for the participation of the members of the Commission in the twentieth session.

62. The Director also provided information on the trust fund for the purpose of facilitating the preparation of submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for developing States, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, and compliance with article 76 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. He indicated that a contribution of $100,000 had been made by Portugal in 2007 and that, as at 30 June 2007, the fund balance was approximately $2,328,000. He added that 19 participants in the training course organized in South Africa (see para. 59 above) had received assistance from the fund. The Director also informed the Commission that, with a view to facilitating greater use of the trust fund, the Division is working with the Office of the Controller and a number of other offices within the Organization on a method for facilitating payment from the trust fund. Such a change would not alter the requirements contained in the terms of reference, guidelines and rules of the trust fund, according to which all proposed activities must be approved on the basis of

the evaluation and recommendation of the Division on the advice of the independent panel of experts.

Conclusion

63. The Commission expressed its appreciation to the outgoing members and officers of the Commission and renewed its expressions of appreciation to the staff of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, as well as to the interpreters, translators and other staff, for the assistance and services provided during the current session.